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A CANADIAN TWILIGHT

and other Poems of War and of Peace

BERNARD FREEMAN TROTTER

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A CANADIAN TWILIGHT
AND OTHER POEMS OF WAR AND OF PEACE

BERNARD FREEMAN TROTTER

A Canadian Twilight

and Other Poems of War and of Peace

By

Bernard Freeman Trotter

Second Lieutenant, Eleventh Leicesters, Killed in Action, in France, May 7, 1917

With an Introduction by

W. S. W. McLay, M.A.

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Since the Author did not live to gather his verses together for publication in book form, upon others has fallen the double task of selecting these poems from the much larger number which he wrote, and of arranging them as they are here presented. Responsibility in these matters is in no wise attributable to the Author.

A number of the poems have appeared in *The Canadian Magazine, St. Nicholas League, Western Field, Munsey's Magazine, The Editor, Harper's Magazine, The Acadia Athenaeum,* and *The McMaster Monthly.* For permission to reprint them acknowledgments are due to the Editors.

It is here also desired to thank Professor W. S. W. McLay of McMaster University for his kindness in writing the introduction to this volume.

T. T.

Toronto, *July* 7, 1917.

To "Louie and Alf"

AND ALL WHO LOVED HIM THIS LITTLE BOOK

IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

"And so I sing the poplars: and when I come
to die
I will not look for jasper walls, but cast about
my eye
For a row of windblown poplars against an
English sky."

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INTRODUCTION

Bernard Freeman Trotter was killed in action in France on May 7th, 1917. By his early death—he was only twenty-six—Canada lost a brave soldier and one of the most promising of her younger poets. Those who knew him best may be pardoned if they link him in their thought with Rupert Brooke and Alan Seeger. As the former died for England in the Aegean, and the latter, an American, gave his life for France at the Somme, so Bernard Trotter laid himself on the altar of heroic and unselfish sacrifice for his native land and the sacred cause for which the Empire fights. Without claiming for him equality with either of these "inheritors of unfulfilled renown" in respect of promise or achievement, one may justly say that, like them, he was a true poet, dowered with love of beauty and a quick sense of her manifold apparitions, and possessed of a native gift for the expression of poetic thought and feeling in musical rhythms. Cut off in his youthful prime he has left only a slender sheaf of verse, but enough to prove that he had the authentic singing note of the born poet. The purpose of the present writer, however, is not to give a critical estimate of his poetry, but, with the sympathy the sad circumstances manifestly demand, to record the facts of his life and death and to point out the influences that shaped his character and called forth his powers.

Bernard Freeman Trotter was born in Toronto on

June 16th, 1890, the son of Rev. Professor Thomas Trotter of McMaster University and Ellen M. Freeman Trotter. When he was five years old the family moved to Wolfville, Nova Scotia, where his father became President of Acadia University. There for ten impressionable years his soul had a fair seed-time in a home of generous culture amid the lovely scenery of the Cornwallis Valley and the storied land of Evangeline. The blue waters of Minas Basin, the towering bulk of picturesque Cape Blomidon, and the grey hills of Cumberland in the distance were daily before his eyes, while from a neighboring ridge a perfect view could be had of the enchanting valley of the Gaspereau. Many a happy hour he spent whipping that stream for speckled trout. Wild flowers were plentiful, especially in early spring, when the trailing arbutus could be found in shy woodsy places. Later in the year miles and miles of pink apple blossoms supplied a feast of colour and fragrance, and in the autumn the gorgeous glory of the leaves was indeed a "vision splendid." Inevitably such scenes fostered his nascent delight in earth's loveliness and gave him an impulse to poetic utterance. His first verses, written at the age of fourteen, were an attempt to describe a sunset even more exquisite than usual. The "Juvenile Verses" in the present volume were the product of these early years.

He received the greater part of his preparatory education at the Horton Collegiate Academy, Wolfville, but completed it at Woodstock College, Woodstock, Ontario, entering the senior year in 1906 and matriculating into McMaster University in 1907 at the age of seventeen. In view of his physical frailty the doctors advised a visit to California. A three years' stay there proved beneficial to his health and exerted a fruitful influence on the growth of his poetic powers. In the Montecito Valley, with magnificent mountains on the one hand and the Pacific Ocean on the other, he once more found himself in scenes that fed his eager appetite for beauty. The first winter was spent on a lemon ranch with his brother Reginald, and the other two were devoted to teaching, first as a tutor to a small boy in a private family and later as instructor in a select school for boys.

For a youthful poet, with an increasingly ardent love of nature and an insistent impulse towards self-expression, the conditions of his life were ideal. His work was light and left much leisure for life out of doors. He tramped, swam, and rode a great deal, finding keen delight in galloping over the sands on a swift steed that was always at his disposal. One such experience he caught and vividly limned in the resounding lines of "A Ride by the Sea." Beautiful friendships, too, were his, which left a deposit of sweet

memories in his soul, as may be gathered from the sonnets "To Esther." He gave much time to the study of literature. Feeling modestly conscious of some poetic power, he put himself under rigorous discipline to attain command of the technique of verse. His note-books show how persistently he strove to cultivate his art. Altogether these three years in the West were a very happy period in his short life. In later days California always wore for him the shining colours of romance. He cherished hopes of returning, and just before going to the War received the offer of an attractive position there but unhesitatingly put it by in order to follow the path of duty.

In 1910 he came back to Canada and entered McMaster University. Though he was much stronger than when he went away, the state of his health made watchful care imperative and he therefore resolved to spend five years in proceeding to his degree. He made a brilliant record as a student, especially in English literature, in which he was recognized by his fellows as easily first. His critical essays, notably one on Browning's "Childe Roland," were little masterpieces of insight and appreciation and expression. He took a prominent part in undergraduate activities, and for one year was editor of the *McMaster University Monthly,* in which a number of his verses first appeared. On one occasion, when a divisive and artificial agita-

tion had sprung up, he wrote about it with such good-humoured sanity as to contribute materially to the restoration of good feeling. He gratefully took full advantage of the opportunities for intellectual culture afforded by the college course, but amid the pressure of lectures and examinations and social distractions he was able, as the verses entitled "My Inn" show, to escape into a tranquil world of imagination where he nourished his young spirit with high thoughts and beautiful dreams. He wrote much and began to receive a measure of recognition. He was greatly encouraged when "The Road to Tartary" was accepted by *Harper's Magazine*. All his vacations were spent in northern Ontario. With rowboat and tent and light camp outfit he explored the Maganatawan River and on the banks of Lake Cecebe discovered a site for a summer home for his parents and the family. A cottage in the Californian style furnished with an artistic fire-place now stands there as a mark of his taste as a designer and practical capacity as a builder. For five summers he lived in closest contact with Mother Earth from May to October, delighting to listen to "the mellow wind among the pines" and to

> "The water washing on the lonely crags,
> The evening call of loon and whip-poor-will."

There he saw great rafts of logs which had been floated down the river, a sight which his transform-

ing imagination wrought up into an impressive picture in "The Log Boom."

At the outbreak of the War, Bernard was just about to enter his senior year at college. He promptly joined the Canadian Officers' Training Corps, and drilled assiduously while completing his course for the degree of B.A., which he obtained in May, 1915. Though he was willing to enlist for active service, a commission with the Canadian Forces seemed unattainable and his capacity to undergo the hardships of life in the ranks was questionable. The title poem of the present volume is a sincere expression of how repugnant to him were his apparent "ignoble ease and peaceful sloth," and of how his spirit chafed at the bars of his physical weakness. In imagination he lived in France, but seeing no immediate prospect of following his heart thither he entered the University of Toronto in October, 1915, to pursue graduate study in English literature. Shortly afterwards a call came for Canadian university men to apply for commissions in the Imperial Army, and to this he responded with joyful alacrity. After an initial disappointment, he was finally chosen and with high heart sailed for England in March, 1916.

Upon his arrival he at once went into training, for a short time at Shorncliffe but mainly at Oxford, where he was billeted at Keble College. To listen to Shelley's

lark and to tread the ground haunted by Arnold's Scholar Gipsy were the happy fulfillment of his youthful dream. He had scant time for poetry, but one of the many English scenes that sank into his heart evoked the melodious triple rhymes of "The Poplars." In due course he qualified for a commission and by a stroke of good fortune was assigned to the Leicester Regiment as a second lieutenant. His father was born in Leicestershire and members of other branches of the family were still living in various parts of the country. It was a joy to Bernard to seek out the tiny village of Thurlaston, his father's birthplace, and to share the hospitality of his English relatives, into whose affections he won an easy way by his obvious graces. Now that he is gone, it is a consolation to his parents and loved ones to remember that it was his privilege to spend some of his last days in the pleasant places of England, and to receive kindly ministrations from his own kith and kin.

About the middle of December he crossed over to France, "quite well in body and restful in mind." He was attached to a Pioneer Battalion, and during the first four months saw some active service, repairing trenches and consolidating after attacks, though for part of this time he was busy taking the various courses necessary to make young officers fully efficient. In April he returned to the line "through a world

bathed in sunshine and soft air, green grass sprouting everywhere, sapphire seas and skies, and a flitting glimpse of the far cliffs of Albion." He was at once temporarily installed as Assistant Transport Officer, and in a few hours was in charge of a convoy and "sniffing again the acrid reek of high-explosive and listening with a very personal interest to the whistle and bang of shells." "I'm certainly pleased," he wrote, "to get a chance at the Transport, even if it's only for a short time"—too short, alas! Every other night it was his task to superintend the convoying of supplies to the front line. In his last letter home, written on Sunday, May 6th, he describes his experiences thus:

"Had a fairly quiet trip last night, though there were a few bits of excitement. At times the Bosch is a most methodical man. He picks out a certain spot on the road and drops a shell on it for luck at regular intervals of time. We ran across him in one of these moods. We could see ahead a nice black crump go up as regularly as clock-work about once a minute. It's easy then. You go up as close as you dare, wait for one to go off, and then make a dash for it, hell-for-leather, sparks flying from the pavé, wheels rattling, din most glorious. It's really rather fun once in a while, and not particularly dangerous, for when the Bosch is in methodical mood he can usually be counted on. . . . This morning had . . . a romp with some

little French kiddies who came around our stores shed. . . . It seems strange to think of these kiddies here, some of them not old enough to remember life without the sound of the guns."

On the night of May 7th he had just unloaded his sixth and last load under heavy shell fire and had commended his men for their good work when a high explosive shell burst quite close to him, killing him instantly. He fell from his horse, and "when they went to him where he lay dead," wrote a fellow lieutenant, "they found his face perfectly calm, with a suspicion of a smile on the lips." The next afternoon his brother officers bore his body to the Military Cemetery at Mazingarbe, where the senior Nonconformist padré of the Division conducted the funeral service in the presence of the O. C., a large number of the officers of the Battalion, and the whole of the Transport Section. A simple oak cross and a wooden curb mark his grave. "Brief, brave, and glorious was his young career."

Though a novice in war, Lieut. Trotter had already won golden opinions from those with whom he served. Lieut.-Col. C. Turner, his commanding officer, describes him as "an officer of great promise . . . one of the coolest men I have ever seen under shell-fire," and as one who "gave his life for his comrades, his King and country, without fear or excitement." His

orderly pays this tribute to his "late master and friend": "I have mourned him as if he had been my own brother. He was a great favourite with the officers and men of the Battalion, especially the men of the Transport Section, who would have followed him anywhere, never mind what the danger." A corporal tells of a soldier reported for misbehaviour that exposed him to a court-martial. Instead of reporting the man Bernard called him in and talked to him so persuasively that "now," says the corporal, "the man is one of the most obedient in the whole company and would gladly have given his life for Lieut. Trotter." Rev. I. Herbert Pearce, senior Nonconformist padré of the Division, writes: "We spent many an hour in discussing literature and politics, particularly, of course, Imperial politics, the churches, the war, religion and life. . . . I learned a great deal from him and came to appreciate very highly his qualities of mind and heart. In a quiet and unostentatious way he lived a sincere and consistent Christian life. In every way I was pleased with him, as a son of the manse, a representative of the church to which I myself belong, and as one who cherished that essential quality of faith so much needed in these dark and difficult times. I had learned to trust his judgment, and it is quite evident his colonel appreciated his powers and services, as he had chosen him for a position of responsibility."

The following brief excerpts from his own letters may be quoted: "I have been up the line every night this week except last. It is a weird life in many ways, but it is surprising how soon one becomes accustomed to it. The sudden kettle-drum staccato of the machine-guns searching for working parties, the vivid flares of the Very lights and the dense darkness which succeeds, the whistle of the salvo of shells overhead, hardly make you raise your head, unless something is a bit close. Then, of course, you hug the bank, or the bottom of the trench, and wait till the row stops or the light goes out, and carry on." . . . . "Yesterday was Sunday and for the first time since leaving the Base I was able to attend service. It gave one a new thrill at their majesty and beauty to repeat the Te Deum and the Nunc Dimittis in a room scarred, walls and ceiling, with shrapnel; and with the roll of the guns for accompaniment instead of the organ." . . . . "My present surroundings are hardly conducive to the study or production of poetry, though they frequently produce momentary poetical impulses which, if more reflective opportunities come, may not be wholly lost." . . . . "Arnold's 'Sohrab and Rustum' is pure poetry, satisfying as few things do." . . . . "Service's 'Rhymes of a Red Cross Man' is a book worth reading and re-reading. He gives you modern war with its glamour (for it has a glamour in spite of

what most of us say), and he gives you it without. You won't read many pages with dry eyes, and yet it doesn't make you morbid or pessimistic. And the best of it all is that he has preserved his sanity with regard to the only possible way of bringing peace on earth, and that is, having beaten the Bosch, to give him the hand of friendship" . . . . "I didn't realize how much I really did care for the honour of America until I saw her actually coming into line. Wilson's speech seems to have infused a fresh idealism into the whole conflict."

Tennyson's lines may be used without impropriety to describe Bernard Trotter. Like Arthur Hallam's, his was a

> "High nature amorous of the good,
> But touch'd with no ascetic gloom;
> And passion pure in snowy bloom,
> Thro' all the years of April blood."

It is the simple truth to say that he was a knight of the Holy Grail who fought a good fight because his heart was pure. The spirit that animated his life and was exemplified in his death may be learnt from the concluding lines of "The Log-Boom":

> "For what is it to die,
> Be it a man, or tree, or any other thing,
> So that in death is service, and the world
> Be thrust one hair's-breadth nearer to the dawn."

He was sincerely religious and had an unfaltering faith in immortality. Not given to much speech about his religious convictions, he lived Christianity in his everyday life. Gentleness and strength were happily blended in his winsome personality. In the home he honoured his father with filial piety, displayed an exquisite courtesy of manner to his mother, and held his sisters and brother in tender affection. To them, and to others who knew him intimately,

> "Earth seems more sweet to live upon,
> More full of love, because of him."

W. S. W. McLAY.

Toronto, *August,* 1917.

WAR POEMS

TO THE STUDENTS OF LIÉGE

(August 1914)

In old Liége, when those dark tidings came
  Of German honor callously forsworn,
  And the red menace that should bring the scorn
Of ages on the Kaiser's name and shame,
And crown their city with a deathless fame,
  The students wrote, they say, that summer morn
  For their degrees, then joined the hope forlorn
Of Liberty, and passed in blood and flame.

O valiant souls! who loved not Duty less
  Than Honor, whom no fears could move to shirk
    The common task, no tyrant's threat subdue
When Right and Freedom called in their distress,—
  Not vain your sacrifice nor lost your work:
    The World's free heart beats high because of you!

Toronto, *September* 1914.

A CANADIAN TWILIGHT

PEACE . . . . Peace . . . . the peace of dusky shores
And tremulous waters where dark shadows lie;
The stillness of low sounds . . . . the ripple's urge
Along the keel, the distant thrush's call,
The drip of oars; the calm of dew-filled air;
The peace of afterglow; the golden peace
Of the moon's finger laid across the flood.

Yet ah! how few brief, fleeting moments since,
That same still finger lay at Langemarck,
And touched the silent dead, and wanly moved
Across the murky fields and battle lines
Where late my Country's bravest kept their faith.

O heavenly beauty of our northern wild,
I held it once the perfect death to die
In such a scene, in such an hour, and pass
From glory unto glory—Time, perhaps,
May yet retrieve that vision—oh! but now
These quiet hills oppress me: I am hedged
As in that selfish Eden of the dawn
Wherein man fell to rise; and I have sucked
The bitter fruit of knowledge, and am robbed
Of my rose-decked contentment, when I hear
Though far, the clash of arms, the shouts, the groans—
A world in torment, dying to be saved.

Oh God! the blood of Outram* in these veins
Cries shame upon the doom that dams it here
In useless impotence, while the red torrent runs
In glorious spate for Liberty and Right!
Oh, to have died that day at Langemarck!
In one fierce moment to have paid it all—
The debt of life to Earth, and Hell, and Heaven!
To have perished nobly in a noble cause!
Untarnished, unpolluted, undismayed,
By the dank world's corruption, to have passed,
A flaming beacon-light to gods and men!
For in the years to come it shall be told
How these laid down their lives, not for their homes,
Their orchards, fields and cities: "They were driven
To slaughter by no tyrant's lust for power;
Of their free manhood's choice they crossed the sea
To save a stricken people from its foe.
They died for Justice—Justice owes them this:
That what they died for be not overthrown."

Peace . . . . Peace . . . . not thus may I find peace:
Like a caged leopard chafing at its bars
In ineffectual movement, this clogged spirit
Must pad its life out, an unwilling drone,
In safety and in comfort; at the best
Achieving patience in the gods' despite
And at the worst—somehow the debt is paid.

Lake Cecebe, *June* 1915.

(*Written while frail health prevented enlistment.*)

DREAMS

Not as we dream them,
  Rose-sweet and wonderful,
Laughter-thrilled, magical,
  Our dreams come true.

Always some hidden,
  Unforeseen circumstance,
Seeming malevolence,
  Darkens the view.

Something we want not,
  Ugly and masterful,
Sprouts through the beautiful,
  Wars with our joy.

Someone is missing:
  Gone the sweet comradeship,
Commerce of eye and lip—
  Barren is Troy.

Yet go we ever,
  Though earthly experience
Mocks at their radiance,
  Dreaming our dreams.

Dreams without reason,
  Rose-sweet and wonderful,
Laughter-thrilled, magical.—
  Fools?—So it seems.

Or is there a feeble
  Spark of the infinite
Burning in Hell's despite,
  In me and you,

Lighting us onward
  Through the inscrutable
To a land wonderful
Where, as we dream them,
  Our dreams will come true?

Toronto, *March* 1916.

(Written on the eve of his departure for England.)

TO ESTHER

I

When I have reckoned all thy passing meant—
The loss to earth of music and of dream,
Of smiles and laughter, that out-welling stream
Of thought and fancy, so divinely blent
With a sweet sympathy and pure intent
Of goodness, yea, those frailties ev'n, which seem
Like virtues—Rare Musician, then, I deem
Thyself wast earth's most perfect instrument.

Thou hadst a tone for every touch of Life,
His variant moods a variant music woke:
Now the bold treble of the marching fife,
The ethereal flute, the banjo's merry din,
Now through the organ's troubled brooding spoke
The deep soul-passion of the violin.

II

I thought to-day, how, long and long ago,
Upon the beach at Santa Barbara,
And in the marble moon-washed pergola,
And up the canyon pathways treading slow,
We talked of England; and in words aglow
With the strange magic of that mighty name
Planned how, as pilgrims to the shrine of fame,
To our loved poets' England we would go.

Ah! happy dream! but you will never stray
  On Wordsworth's hills, listen to Shelley's lark;
And I, who thought no sterner part to play
  Than pupil-idler, go with naked sword—
  Cry: "Take and use!"—to England grim and stark,
  Holding the pass 'gainst a barbarian horde.

III

If to those ambient regions penetrate
  News of this planet, rumour of its wars:
  How that the brazen monster stamps and gores
The great-souled little peoples, in mad hate
Of Liberty—O Thou, her novice late,
  Full well I know thy generous spirit adores
  Her warriors, and a benediction pours
On all to her high service consecrate.

Therefore I take thee with me: come what may
  Thou shalt share all: our spirits hand in hand
  Will take the primrose-path our springtime planned,
In spite of storm-washed furrows; if it lead
To the grim press of battle, on that day
Thou too wilt strike for England in her need.

Toronto, *March* 1916.

THE POPLARS

O, A LUSH green English meadow—it's there that I
would lie—
A skylark singing overhead, scarce present to the eye,
And a row of wind-blown poplars against an English
sky.

The elm is aspiration, and death is in the yew,
And beauty dwells in every tree from Lapland to Peru;
But there's magic in the poplars when the wind goes
through.

When the wind goes through the poplars and blows
them silver white,
The wonder of the universe is flashed before my sight:
I see immortal visions: I know a god's delight.

I catch the secret rhythm that steals along the earth,
That swells the bud, and splits the burr, and gives
the oak its girth,
That mocks the blight and canker with its eternal birth.

It wakes in me the savor of old forgotten things,
Before "reality" had marred the child's imaginings:
I can believe in fairies— I see their shimmering wings.

I see with the clear vision of that untainted prime,
Before the fool's bells jangled in and Elfland ceased
to chime,
That sin and pain and sorrow are but a pantomime—

A dance of leaves in ether, of leaves threadbare and
sere,
From whose decaying husks at last what glory shall
appear
When the white winter angel leads in the happier year.

And so I sing the poplars; and when I come to die
I will not look for jasper walls, but cast about my eye
For a row of wind-blown poplars against an English
sky.

Oxford, *September* 1916.

A KISS

She kissed me when she said good-bye—
A child's kiss, neither bold nor shy.

We had met but a few short summer hours;
Talked of the sun, the wind, the flowers,

Sports and people; had rambled through
A casual catchy song or two,

And walked with arms linked to the car
By the light of a single misty star.

(It was war-time, you see, and the streets were dark
Lest the ravishing Hun should find a mark.)

And so we turned to say good-bye;
But somehow or other, I don't know why,

—Perhaps 't was the feel of the khaki coat
(She'd a brother in Flanders then) that smote

Her heart to a sudden tenderness
Which issued in that swift caress—

Somehow, to her, at any rate
A mere hand-clasp seemed inadequate;

And so she lifted her dewy face
And kissed me— but without a trace

Of passion,—and we said good-bye. . . .
A child's kiss, . . . neither bold nor shy.

My friend, I like you—it seemed to say—
Here's to our meeting again some day!
Some happier day. . . .
Good-bye.

August 1916.

AN APRIL INTERLUDE—1917

April snow agleam in the stubble,
Melting to brown on the new-ploughed fields,
April sunshine, and swift cloud-shadows
Racing to spy what the season yields
Over the hills and far away:
Heigh! and ho! for an April day!
Hoofs on the highroad: *Ride—tr-r—ot!*
Spring's in the wind, and war's forgot,
As we go riding through Picardy.

Up by a wood where a brown hawk hovers,
Down through a village with white-washed walls,
A wooden bridge and a mill-wheel turning,
And a little stream that sports and brawls
Into the valley and far away:
Heigh! and ho! for an April day!
Children and old men stop to stare
At the clattering horsemen from *Angleterre,*
As we go riding through Picardy.

On by the unkempt hedges, budding,
    On by the Chateau gates flung wide.
Where is the man who should trim the garden?
    Where are the youths of this country-side?—
Over the hills and far away
Is war, red war, this April day.
    So for the moment we pay our debt
    To the cause on which our faith is set,
As we go riding through Picardy.

Then the hiss of the spurting gravel,
    Then the tang of the wind on the face,
Then the splash of the hoof-deep puddle,
    Spirit of April setting the pace
Over the hills and far away:
Heigh! and ho! for an April day!
    Heigh! for a ringing: *Ride—tr-r—ot!*
    Ho!—of war we've never a thought
As we go riding through Picardy.

France, *April* 1917.

"ICI REPOSE"

A LITTLE cross of weather-silvered wood,
Hung with a garish wreath of tinselled wire,
And on it carved a legend—thus it runs:
"Ici repose—" Add what name you will,
And multiply by thousands: in the fields,
Along the roads, beneath the trees—one here,
A dozen there, to each its simple tale
Of one more jewel threaded star-like on
The sacrificial rosary of France.

And as I read and read again those words,
Those simple words, they took a mystic sense;
And from the glamour of an alien tongue
They wove insistent music in my brain,
Which, in a twilight hour, when all the guns
Were silent, shaped itself to song.

O happy dead! who sleep embalmed in glory,
Safe from corruption, purified by fire,—
Ask you our pity?—ours, mud-grimed and gory,
Who still must grimly strive, grimly desire?

You have outrun the reach of our endeavour,
Have flown beyond our most exalted quest,—
Who prate of Faith and Freedom, knowing ever
That all we really fight for's just—a rest,

The rest that only Victory can bring us—
Or Death, which throws us brother-like by you—
The civil commonplace in which 'twill fling us
To neutralize our then too martial hue.

But you have rest from every tribulation
Even in the midst of war; you sleep serene,
Pinnacled on the sorrow of a nation,
In cerements of sacrificial sheen.

Oblivion cannot claim you: our heroic
War-lustred moment, as our youth, will pass
To swell the dusty hoard of Time the Stoic,
That gathers cobwebs in the nether glass.

We shall grow old, and tainted with the rotten
Effluvia of the peace we fought to win,
The bright deeds of our youth will be forgotten,
Effaced by later failure, sloth, or sin;

But you have conquered Time, and sleep forever,
Like gods, with a white halo on your brows—
Your Souls our lode-stars, your death-crowned endeavour
The spur that holds the nations to their vows.

France, *April* 1917.

(*His last poem, the manuscript of which reached his parents the day after he was killed.*)

THE CLAN OF THE WATERS

THE CLAN OF THE WATERS:

A Celtic Legend

MANANNAN, god of the winds and the sea,
Flat on his back on the sands lay he,
Trolling a song right merrily:
"Come hither, come hither, thou little wind,"
(Such and such was the song he sang)
"Come hither; I've something for thee to find."
(Oh! how mellow the echoes rang!)
"Find me a wave with a sea-green base,
A rollicking, wandering, roisterous wave,
With a crest o' foam, and a laughing face,
A bit o' blue where the wind-flaws part,
And a sunbeam pricking his homeless heart—
Ho! but I love the knave!"

Manannan, god of the winds and the sea,
Half of a summer's day sang he;
Till the croon of the waves, and the warm sunshine,
Had wooed him to sleep; and so, in fine,
He slept beside the sea.

Then came a man of the Island race,
Seeking his love by cliff and scaur;
And a mermaid rose to his embrace
Up from the foam of the bar.
Up from the foam of the bar came she,
Clad in a robe of rainbow mist,

That her clammy tail he should not see:
For he thought her a maid of the earth, did he;
And she waited to be kissed.
Oh! when he found her among the rocks,
Fair and fair was she indeed!
With her foam-white breasts, and her tumbled locks
Falling adown, falling adown,
Over her face and her sea-spray gown,
And her girdle of brown sea-weed.
Close and close did he fold her fast,
And he kissed her lips so warm and red—
But over their heads a lone gull passed;
And she sighed for a joy that could not last,
And she wished that she were dead.

He heard the sigh, and bye and bye,
He sighed himself, he knew not why,
And all at once he said:
"Come away, come away, come—
Away and away with me,
For I hear in my heart the hum
Of the sweet-cloyed homing bee.
Too long, too long, have we gone our ways,
When the passionate eve was sped;
Too long, too long, have we spent our days
In the gloom of a nameless dread,
Lest one should come, and the other fail—
Lest one should come and wearily wait,
And the other be knocking at Heaven's gate,

And all the sea should wail.
But come, come, come,
Home to my smouldering hearth:
Love shall kindle it into a flame
Warm to the ends of the earth.
These are yours if you will but come,
Share my portion, and take my name:
Love, and peace, and a home."

"Alas! alas! that cannot be,"
She cried in a woeful agony.
"He who weds me loves and loves
Whithersoever his fancy roves.
Oh! woe is me! no home I bring
To him who gives me a marriage ring.
The quiet of all his days shall cease—
Oh! wed not me if you look for peace.
An you wed with me, this shall you have:
Peace as the peace of the restless wave;
An you wed with me, this shall you find:
A love as light as the wandering wind;
This shall you know, an you wed with me:
The homelessness of the sea."

"What! say you so? and say you so?
You speak in riddles I cannot read—
Or else you are no woman, I trow!"
"A woman am I, indeed.
And woe is me for my woman's heart,

That you should ask what I cannot give!
And woe is me! that we two should part,
Forever apart to live!
But I must go to my home below,
And you to your lone hearthside:
The little mermaidens will cheer my woe,
And you will a kindlier passion know
In the arms of a warmer bride."
She reared her up on her finny tail,
And flung her rainbow garment wide.
He shuddered cold, his face grew pale,
He started from her side.

At that she laughed a bitter laugh:
"Farewell! I knew how this would be;
And here I strike Love's epitaph,
That is for you and me."
She clasped aloft her lily hands,
Her strong tail smote the wave-lapped sands,
She plunged beneath the sea.

Manannan, tho' sound asleep he lay,
Had heard these lovers—for that's a way
That the great gods have;—and ere the spray
Of the mermaid's dive had touched the bay,
He roused himself, assumed a youth,
Mourned with the man for his love uncouth,
Who told his tale to this stranger-friend
Right readily. When he reached the end:

"'T is well," said the god, "now list to me—
Forget this woman from out the sea,
And seek a bride that is meet for thee.
Her shalt thou find among the heather,
Singing alone in a windy weather,
And fair and white is she.
But now, for that I know thy pain,
And lest thou sorrow so in vain
For thy lost love, the ocean's daughter,
Take thou a gift from the god of water."
He caught a wave with a sea-green base,
A rollicking, wandering, roisterous wave,
With a crest o' foam, and a laughing face;
He plucked the good-man's dress apart,
And he threw it into his throbbing heart—
Oh! what a gift he gave!

Home went the man, no longer sad,
And straightway did as the great god bade.
He sought his love on the purple heather,
And found her there in a windy weather,
Singing her song alone.
He wooed her, fair in her innocence,
Wooed her, and won her, and bore her thence,
Home to his own hearthstone.
But nevermore, till the day he died,
Was the soul of this man satisfied:
For ever he felt in his restless blood
The surge of the deep sea's rolling flood;

And evermore would his fancy roam
With the wild wind out to the driving foam;
And he loved he knew not how nor why,
With a love that changed, but could not die.

And still the gift that the great god gave
Leaps in the veins of his children brave:
By day and by night they may not flee
The spell of the ocean's mystery;
By day and by night a love they know,
Tameless, and changeable, as tho'
The wandering wind had schooled it so;
No peace have they by night or day,
For a restless longing calls them aye,
From the sheltered cove and the quiet bay,
Out where the stormy tempests meet,
To the drifting spray, and the driving sleet—
And they cannot choose but go.
With a laugh they claim their heritage,
A laugh of something more than mirth,
That bravely rings across the sea,
And challenges eternity
For the home they lack on earth.—
And all who hear, from age to age,
By this sign know their birth.

They are the children of the wave,
The wondrous gift Manannan gave;
And still they sing, as then he sang,

When the hollow caves in answer rang:
"Give us a wave with a sea-green base,
A rollicking, wandering, roisterous wave,
With a crest o' foam, and a laughing face,
A bit o' blue where the wind-flaws part,
And a sun-beam pricking his homeless heart—
Ho! but we love the knave!"

So, the sea in their blood cries out to the Sea;
And they serve the wanton right loyally:
Whether she smiles on their devotion,
Cradling them with a slumbrous motion,
Or whether she storms, and wrecks, and slaughters,
It matters not to the Clan of the Waters.

Lake Cecebe, *June* 1912.

CALIFORNIA POEMS

ALTARS

Ye barren peaks, so mightily outlined
In naked rock against the viewless sky,
Your rugged grandeur mocks my human pride,
And rouses it to passionate reply.

Ye scorn the foot that treads your pathless ways,
The voice that breaks your primal solitudes,
Yea, e'en the eye that views your serried heights,
The ear that hears your canyon interludes.

Yet know that when your music-making brooks
Have buried you beneath the conquering sea,
And mingled heart of stone with oozy mud,
The topmost summit with the level lea,

This ear shall hear the deathless song of Life,
This eye shall see beyond the outmost skies,
This voice shall sing soul-music, and this foot
Shall tread the love-lit paths of Paradise.

Should I, then, born immortal, bow to you,
Who are but transient mounds of earthy clod?—
O glorious heights!—I kneel in humble awe
To worship at the altars of my God.

Montecito, 1908.

SONG OF THE EARTH-MOTHER TO THE WEST-WIND

O WIND! blow out from the golden west,
Bring up the damp of the silver sea,
And leave it pearled on my sun-dried breast!—
So cool! so cool! blow over me!

Shake off the dust from my smallest flower,
Make rustle the leaves of my tallest tree,
And kiss my maids in their June-rose bower!—
Ah sly! so sly! blow over me!

Pipe up your music, a merry dance
Lead off o'er meadow, and brook, and lea,
And make your pretty children prance!—
So gay! so gay! blow over me!

Waft on the breath of the columbine,
Catch up the scent of the rosemary,
And blend them all in a perfume fine!—
So sweet! so sweet! blow over me!

Blow high! blow low! sweet, sly, and gay!
Blow on o'er valley, and hill, and lea,
And sink to rest with the dying day,
So tired, tired, over me!

Pasadena, 1907.

THE VIOLET'S HOME

I FOUND a grotto in a nest of hills,
  Half hidden by down-drooping branch and vine,
Where year by year the mountain torrent drills
  Deeper its pathway between slopes of pine.

A fairy cave it was, scarce large enough
  To let a baby breeze turn twice within;
And all its over-arching roof was rough
  With bright rose-jewels, crystal-clear, and thin,

From which a sweet and dewy dampness dripped
  With liquid note, in bubbling ripples brimmed
The silver-shining basin, hidden slipped
  Through mossy channels, fern- and flower-trimmed.

And there, a half-span from the water's edge,
  A violet nodded, and, with coyest grace,
Bent lightly over from her crannied ledge
  To see, reflected, her own perfect face.

The clustering grasses, nestled at her feet
  In shy attendance, waited her command,
And, roguish, raised their slender forms to greet
  Her green leaves, set like guards on either hand.

Thus wrapped in the incense of her honeyed breath,
And lulled by murmurs from the pearly spring,
The cave her dwelling was for life and death—
A fitting casket for so fair a thing.

Montecito, 1908.

A RIDE BY THE SEA

CRASH of waves, and thunder of hoofs,
And a Cavalier song on the sea-drenched air.—
And ho! for a ride by the ocean's side!—
Ten miles of sand beach smooth and fair.

Strewn by the wind, by the strong waves packed,
Our course lies firm to the setting sun.
And ho! for a race!—By my lady's grace
We'll spur for a token e'er day is done.

"What?—a ribbon? a scarf? say this."—
She looses the band from her struggling locks.—
" 'Tis yours"—setting spur—"with a kiss, good sir,
If you beat me from here to Consbury Rocks."

A word, a pressure of heel and thigh—
Her bay mare's tail's in my sorrel's eyes.—
Speed! Kelly, speed! if you make that lead
A month in pasture shall be your prize!

The waves, the rocks, and the cliffs fly past
In a smother of sand from the bay mare's heels;
In the rush of the wind they are left behind—
An inch and an inch my Kelly steals.

No need of the spur! how he tells his pride
  By the fall and rise of his great red mane,
By the ears laid back as he follows the track,
  By the restive tug on the shortened rein!

My lady's hair is a tangle of gold:
  I could catch it now with my bridle-arm.
Ye gods! it is fair in the sunset's glare!—
  Ye gods!—and here is Consbury Farm!

Then ho! my boy, for the final spurt!
  Now show them, my Kelly, what you can do!—
For yonder's the bend, and beyond—the end;
  And Consbury Rocks swing full in view.

Grandly his great flanks heave and sink.
  Does he know the guerdon? my Kelly, my pride!
One strong wild burst;—neither last nor first,
  We whirl to the finish side by side.

"Now whose,"—as we merrily slacken rein—
  "Now whose shall the kiss and the ribbon be?"
With a look so sly in her witch's eye,
  "We'll divide the trophies, sir," says she.

Straight, her loose tresses she gathers up,
And binds them again with her ribbon fine;
Then turns, lifts her face, as the horses pace—
And the kiss?—the kiss?—ah! that is mine!

Beat of hoofs, and murmur of waves,
And an old love-song on the sea-drenched air,—
And ho! for a ride by the ocean's side,
And a maiden to love me and kiss me there!

Montecito, 1910.

GOOD-NIGHT

GOOD-NIGHT! good-night! for the day is done,
And the shadow-ships lie long
Where the moon shines dim o'er the curved sea's rim,
And the wild wind sings its song.

The wild wind sings to the sea, my love—
Sing, heart of my heart, to me,
While the waves' dull roar on the sounding shore
Fills up the melody;

Till I rest in peace in thine arms, my love;
Till slumber has loosed the bars,
And my thought flies forth, as a gull to the north,
To wander among the stars.

Montecito, 1908.

THE GARDEN OF GRAVES

From out the musty gloom of the church,
The century-mouldered naves,
Come forth to the garden, spring-embow'r'd—
The sunlit garden of graves.

No warder stands at the portal's side,
No beggar a pittance craves;
But the trumpet-flower a welcome breathes
To the silent garden of graves.

The west wind blows o'er the garden wall,
And with sweet shed petals he paves
The path of the living, the mound of the dead,
In the beautiful garden of graves.

With a mellow rush the cool fountain leaps,
And in ripples its basin laves;
While a rainbow arc gleams fair, gleams fair,
O'er the dew-pearled garden of graves.

And through the mist and the bow uprears
The cross, and the Christ that saves:
O envy them not! O pity them not!
That sleep in the garden of graves.

Montecito, 1908.

(*The garden of the old Franciscan Mission at Santa Barbara.*)

TO BRITTA

Little companion of my solitude,
If you could hear, and know, and understand
The thought and impulse of this tribute rude,
Reared in rough measures by your master's hand,
I well can guess how you would look at me,
And thank me with those great brown loving eyes,
Then, glad of recognition, leap in glee,
And coax me off to play with puppy cries.

You could not know that you were showing forth
What made your little life a holy thing:
A simple love that asked not worth for worth,
And claimed small tribute for its offering.
A look, a smile, a word, a fond caress;
With these your faithful love was satisfied.
I give you credit (I can do no less)—
My love is nobler that you lived—and died.

Santa Barbara, 1909.

THE GREY-ROBED CHILD OF THE SEA

Like an odor arising from fragrant gums,
  Like a vision of things to be—
A shadow, a breath, and a silence—comes
  The Grey-Robed Child of the Sea.

Her brow is damp with a beaded dew
  Like the sweat of the toiling years,
Chill agues tremble her body through,
  And her heart is drenched with tears.

Clammy and cold is her pallid hand:
  Its touch is the touch of death.
She waves it thrice, and the fair sweet land
  Fades out in a misty breath.

And some there be of a gladsome mood
  Who hate this maid forlorn
With her chilly robes and her dusky snood:
  For she puts their mirth to scorn.

But I, what care I how sad she look?
  I love this Child of the Sea:
For the day that my False Love me forsook
  She came, and she wept with me.

Santa Barbara, 1910.

AT MIRAMAR

HAVE you been at Miramar?
Have you walked along the sand?
Eaten melons in the shade
Of the crumbling cliffs that stand
Ankle-deep in weed and drift?
Have you watched the children wade
Laughing in the breakers' froth?
Have you lain in dreamy sloth,
Lain and let the white sand sift
Through your fingers, listening
To the laughter and the shout
Of the heedless happy rout,
To the rolling rhythmic roar
Of the curving glistening
Slow breakers as they pour
Their gold-green crests along the shore?
Have you watched the white clouds sail,
And the far black ships go by;
While you framed a patchwork tale
Aimless as a sea-bird's cry,
Adding fancies each to each
In idle rounds of pleasant speech,
With laughter; till the sun went down
Trailing over sea and sky
The roseate cloud-embroidered splendid
Fringes of his orient gown;
Till the quiet night descended

From the mountain, sweet with blended
Odors from the gardens high
Along the cliff-top? By and by,
When the stars burned bright and clear,
Through the stillness did you hear
The poignant summons of a far
Faint bugle-echo, sounding "Taps;"
And climb the cliffs, and looking back
Towards the ocean vast and black,
Stand a moment, closer prest
Each to each, and feel the soul
Slough its mortal bonds and flow
In sweet commingling with the slow
Strange tide of beauty, till, the goal
Of Being all but reached, the charm
Broke like a full-blown bubble; then
With awe-hushed whispers, arm in arm,
Turn to the common way again
And lightly pass to home and rest?
Such a day
Have you spent in such a way?
Then perhaps
You know the magic
And the tragic
Meaning of the simple-seeming
Phrase that glimmers through my dreaming
Like a star:
At Miramar.

EVENING

The sacrifices of the day are done, the froth
Of busy tumult sinks in sweet desire,
And Night, high heaven's priestess, spreads her altar-cloth
Of spangled velvet, fringed with slumbering fire.

Montecito, 1909.

INGEBORG: An Elegy

Oh! what so wild as the white sea-gull!
  So daring, so glad, so free!
Child of the blast and the roaring vast
  Of the dauntless restless Sea!—
Mourn for her, mourn for her, white sea-gull!
  Kin of thy kin was she.

Mourn her, ye Winds from summer seas
  That stir the orange-blooms!
In vain ye seek among the trees
  Those tawny Viking-plumes
She loved to loose for your delight,
  Till, ruffled by your kisses bold,
They clustered round her visage bright,
  A tangled filigree of gold.

Mourn her, ye Mountains! for the voice
That made your shadowed glens rejoice
With echoes of its crystal laughter
Is hushed, is mute, is passed away,
Is lost in the remote hereafter,
In death's illimitable distance.
Wrap your purpled heads in grey:
She whose spirit drew subsistence
From your thunder-riven breasts,
She, your novice, your disciple,

Mid a world of transient guests,
She who marked your rarest summits
For the paths her feet should tread—
She is dead.

Mourn her, thou Ocean!—Need I bid thee mourn?
Ah! no: thou knewest. Ere that word forlorn,
That "She is dead" could falter from the lips
Of those who watched, thou knewest; and the strips
Of umbrous kelp that hedge thy shoreward way
Shook tremulously, and a great shudder ran
Through thy deep bosom, and a voice began,
Thy voice, to wail along the desolate shore,
In anguish and in anger, that thy child,
Thy Viking-child, was lost forevermore,
Thy Viking-daughter, for whom a spirit wild
And free and unafraid had augured death
In storm-blown conflagration as of yore,
When the Valkyrie swooped the elusive breath
From heroes' lips up to the realms of Thor—
And left to thee to quench the scarring fire,
And salve the torments of thy love's desire
With the charred remnants of a funeral pyre.
But now thou mournest, since her form is given
To the rude keeping of the quiet earth,
And that which made it loved and lovely driven
O'er nebulous seas to some invisible birth
In lands beyond our knowledge. All is lost
To thee—and, therefore, mourn!

I, too,
Must haply weep a little, being tossed
From gulf to gulf of dark uncertainty:
Sure only that this loss, my loss, is true,
Her voice forever silent, and instead,
A cruel whisper through the vacancy:
"Thy Ingeborg is dead."

There is a solace in the grief of others
For our most bitter grief,
Our burden, part-transposèd with our brother's,
Is lightened past belief.
And oh, I am not lonely in my sorrow:
Though these, my natural friends,
The winds, the mountains, and the ocean, borrow
A pulse my fancy lends;
Though they in truth be but insensate matter,
Untouched by human woe,
And all this talk of kinship foolish chatter
To the wise ears that know;
Yet have I comradeship in grief, for many
There be of human-kind
Who loved fair Ingeborg, nor are there any
But view with stormy mind
Her glorious planet's all-too-early setting.—
O friends, what bonds are ours!
What fellowship of head and heart, begetting
Calm thoughts and mutual powers
Of consolation and encouragement!

So comes at last a strong tranquility
Upon my soul; the first unthinking grief
Gives place to quiet musings: Love and Death,
The Wherefore and the Why of Human Life—
Old themes, but new until the end of time—
And always, as thought-substance, memories sweet
Of those short summers by the southern sea,
When all the fabric of my life was lit
With golden strands of friendship, chiefly wove
By thy kind fingers, well-beloved friend,
And hers, whom now I sing—the young, the fair,
The starry-souled, God-fashioned Ingeborg.

1913.

OTHER POEMS

THE LOG-BOOM

Across the shining waters of the bay,
A giant half-moon, fettered to the shore,
Like some unruly beast, by either horn,
The log-boom floats, with every shifting wind
Straining now this way and now that, and still,
With sullen grumblings striving to be free.

O Sylvan deities! ye gods of wood and hill!
Look on this scene, and wring your hands and weep.
How are the mighty fallen! Here they lie,
The monarchs of the forest—lordly pines,
And shadowy firs, and twisted cedars—here,
Stripped of their branches, riven of their bark,
Naked, and all unlovely in their chains.

Not theirs to ripen into hoary age,
To listen for the coming of the wind,
And welcome him with strings symphonious,
Until they fell, worn out, with hollow boom—
The grand finale to their harmony;
Not theirs to lie at peace in forest mould,
Till tender mosses compassed them around,
And made their crumbling ruins beautiful;
Not theirs to shelter in their hollow trunks
The feeble woodland creatures; and not theirs
To sink at last into their mother earth,
And through their children rise to life again.

These fell in all the glory of their prime,
Crashed down with angry rush of rending limbs,
And bled at every gash and cruel wound.
Man, the despoiler, stripped them for his use,
Harried them through snow and ice and freshet,
Bound them here to wait his pleasure. Soon,
Riven by whirring saws, some here, some there,
Will go, to be a part of hut or hall,
Palace or kennel—merchandise of trade!

Thus mourned the poet in a bitter mood,
Thinking of those sweet dryads whom he loved,
Cast out by careless hands from house and home,
And of the mighty wrong the forest bore.
When lo! the setting sun smiled on the boom,
And over-decked those naked gleaming hulks
With princely robe of purple, gold, and white;
And then he saw—seeing them thus crowned—
That all was well: for what is it to die,
Be it a man, or tree, or any other thing,
So that in death is service, and the world
Be thrust one hair's-breadth nearer to the dawn.

Lake Cecebe, *June* 1912.

THE SONGS WE NEED

Myriad singers pour their treasures
  Into wearied ears—
Sweet, uncertain, minor measures,
  Trembling doubts and fears.

Why repeat these strains of sadness,
  Which but feed our fears?
Are there no clear notes of gladness
  Straying down the years?

Sing of Sorrow? All men know it.
  Share with them their tears;
Then—ah! then, forget not, poet—
  Sing the Hope that cheers.

1913.

WINTER NOCTURNE

With me is revelry and light,
A wind-blown world of circling rink;
With me is music and the clink
Of frosty steel on crackling ice;
With me the sweet seductive sight
Of gliding figures that entice
The watcher to pursue their flight
Through mazy whirls, alertly tense
To steal swift passage left and right,
All thought o'erwhelmed in giddy sense.
With me is revelry and light,—
With thee, the silence and the night.

Yet oh! could I be with you, dear,
In your rose-garden, wet with dew,
To pluck one perfect bud for you,
Or where the sands at Miramar
In starlit silence glimmer clear,
Hold converse of the near and far,—
No longer would I tarry here
In these mad gaieties; I'd fly,
As from a desert lone and drear,
To that calm pleasure, chaste, and high,
Where souls commune in holy fear
That God should let them draw so near.

Toronto, *December* 1913.

MARCH

A KNAVISH-TEMPERED, disrespectful youth
Is this same March, with rude derisive peals
Larking along at Winter's tottering heels,
Mocking the white-haired wizard without ruth,
Stamping the slush about his legs forsooth,
The while in impotence the victim wheels
To threaten chastisement—with weakness reels—
And bares his ugly frost-envenomed tooth.

March must be taught his manners: in there comes
To warm his breeches good old Master Sun—
Right lusty mellower he of rough and wild.
A few days' drilling—sniff! a scent of gums,
Twigs fringed with color; thus reform's begun.
Watch! ere you know it—was that April smiled?

1914.

TO MOTHER

THERE is a wonder in this common world,
Which never sage nor poet understood,
Since the first nestling its bright wing unfurled—
The holy, tender grace of motherhood.

And thou, who watchest, hovering, the flight
Of thy young birds, half glad, half sad to see
The strengthening wing-beat and the bolder height—
Oh! how that wonder lives and grows in thee!

For many virtuous women have there been,
And many with the wonder in their eyes;
But none like thee, I wis, hath yet been seen,
Since Lemuel's mother taught him to be wise.

June 7, 1911.

THE VISION SPLENDID

It came, the vision splendid,
By shimmering mists attended,
From the red peaks of dawn.
(And oh! could we recapture
Our childhood's wizard rapture!)
It led—I followed on.

'T was a celestial madness,
Glamour of love and gladness,
That made this place of tears
A dwelling rare and sightly
Possessed by Arthurs knightly
And stainless Guineveres.

It passed, the vision splendid,
In a dull vapour blended:
I climbed the hills it crossed.
(And oh! where goes that rapture
That we can not recapture?)
I followed—it was lost.

It was a fairy vision:
The grey world's harsh derision
Has quenched its glowing joy.
I know the pain and badness
The cruel strife and sadness
I knew not when a boy.

Yet still that vision splendid
Remains, though all seems ended,
  A star-gleam in the mind.
(Ah! we may yet recapture
That wise and holy rapture!)
  I follow—till I find.

1915.

"OH! THE LURE OF A SUMMER'S DAY . . ."

Oh! the lure of a Summer's Day!
Shimmering squalls run over the bay,
Calling, calling: "Away! Away!"
And every leaf so green and new
On the wooded hills that skirt its blue
Thrills to his pipes as the Wind goes through,
Calling to me, calling to you,
Calling: "Away! Away!"

Sweet the lure of a Summer's Day,
Sweet the voice of the Wind at play,
Calling, calling across the bay—
But oh! there's a lure more strong than they!
Look! and let us away!

Look!—a gap in the forest wall,
A pasture-slope from wave to sky,
Sheep asleep on the brow o' the hill,
And a winding roadway white and still,
And never a cloud on high.
Look! look! Do you feel the call
Of a road that runs to the sky?

Then hasten, hasten, hasten away!
Laugh at the squalls on the rippled bay!
Nought care we what the fates may bring!
We follow, follow, you understand,
Follow, follow, and stay not still:
Time is nothing: the Road's the thing!
Who knows but the borders of Fairyland
Lie at the crest of the hill!

Lake Cecebe, *June* 1912.

TRANSLATION FROM LEUTHOLD

How fair art thou, O blue, unfathomed lake!
Whose face the West wind almost fears to trouble,
And only snow-white lilies dare to break,
Coy-dipping, that still flood with airy bubble.

Here casts no fisherman his treacherous lure,
Here glides no skiff with tremulous reflection—
Here only Nature's voices, restful, pure,
Murmur to Solitude a sweet subjection.

Wild roses scatter incense on the air,
And scent the forests which around thee tower,
And like the columns of a temple bear
The azure dome of heaven's gracious bower.

A spirit once I knew, contemplative,
Who shut the world away with sealings seven:
Profound, and pure, like thee, he seemed to live
Only to mirror back the face of heaven.

Lake Cecebe, *July* 1912.

TRANSLATION FROM HEINRICH HEINE

I KNEW, sweetheart, you loved me,
I guessed it long ago;
Yet your confession moved me
As this had not been so.

I strode upon the mountains,
I shouted to the skies—
The sunset on the ocean
Brought tears into my eyes.

My heart, aglow with passion,
A blazing sun I bear,
And in love's boundless waters
'T is sinking, great and fair.

Lake Cecebe, *July* 1912.

THE SUPREME MOMENT

If heaven and earth were but an artist's dream,
Star-dust God-flung across an inky sky
On that vast picture whose dim borders lie
In infinite regions; should creative gleam
Of artist eye pass on, and so redeem
No more this inch of canvas you and I
Call universe—this earth whereon we die,
This heaven we fight towards 'gainst a murky stream;
Yet, Love, I'd care not; so I saw your face,
And heard your voice, and felt upon my lips
Your ruddy glowing kisses, crushed the bloom
And drank its fragrance, thus, one breathing space;
I'd cry: "We've loved!—then welcome, dark eclipse!
This moment's flame outweighs eternal gloom!"

1913.

THE ROAD TO TARTARY

O Arab! much I fear thou at Mecca's shrine wilt never be,
For the road that thou art going is the road to Tartary.—Sa'di.

I LEFT the dusty travelled road the proper people tread—
Like solemn sheep they troop along, Tradition at their head;
I went by meadow, stream, and wood; I wandered at my will;
And in my wayward ears a cry of warning echoed still:
"Beware! beware!"—an old refrain they chanted after me—
"The road that thou art going is the road to Tartary."

I clambered over dawn-lit hills—the dew was on my feet;
I crossed the sullen pass at night in wind and rain and sleet;
I followed trains of errant thought through heaven and earth and hell,
And thence I seemed to hear again that unctuous farewell,

For there I dreamed the little fiends were pointing
all at me:
"The road that thou art going is the road to Tar-
tary."

From all the pious wrangling sects I set my spirit free:
I own no creed but God and Love and Immortality.
Their dogmas and their disciplines are dust and smoke
and cloud;
They cannot see my sunlit way; and still they cry aloud,
From church, conventicle, and street, that warning
old to me:
"The road that thou art going is the road to Tar-
tary."

I found a woman God had made, the blind world
tossed aside—
It had not dreamed the greatness hid in poverty and
pride.
I left the world to walk with her and talk with her and
learn
The secret things of happiness—and will I now return
To that blind, prudish world that shrugs and lifts its
brows at me:
"The road that thou art going is the road to Tar-
tary"?

Nay; we will go together, Love—we two to greet the sun.
There are more roads than one to heaven, perhaps more heavens than one.
Here on the lonely heights we see things hid from those who tread
Like sheep the dusty trodden way, Tradition at their head.
We sense the common goal of all—in Mecca we shall be,
Though the road that we are going seem the road to Tartary.

Toronto, *November* 1914.

MAKERS AND MENDERS

I took my watch to the watchmaker.
It had stopped, but for this I could see no reason:
The case showed no flaw upon its golden surface,
The little wheels inside were bright as quicksilver.
"What is wrong with it?" said I, and waited for his answer.

The watchmaker took it in his fingers,
And tweaked at the frail works with his slender forceps.
I wondered that he could handle them so rudely—
So fine they were, so delicate seemed their arrangement.
"Aha!" said he, "there is a jewel broken."
"And can you mend it?" "Yes," he answered,
"I can easily replace it with another."
"And will the watch then go as well as before?"
"Yes," said he, "it will be as good as new."

The Idol that I loved was broken, was broken!
My beautiful Idol with the lips of crimson,
The Idol that the great God gave me in the garden.
In the garden of my dreams, in the morning of the world,
Drawing back the flaming curtain of the sunrise,
He showed her me among the dew and flowers.

She laughed and sang and clasped her arms around me,
She raised her lips to mine, and the fire of youth ran through me.
I thought she would be mine for ever and ever.
I watched her, and did not understand, but only marvelled;
I marvelled, and did not understand, but only worshipped;
I worshipped, and did not understand, but only loved her.

My Idol was broken, was broken, was broken!
Those lips like the petals of a broken lily
Were pale that laughed dawn-red in the red dawning,
And old age came upon me as I kissed them.

Then remembered I the broken watch and the watchmaker;
And I bethought me of a certain mender of idols,
How that he had wrought great wonders with his knives and simples;
And I found him, and showed him my Idol that was broken.
"Can you mend it?" said I, and hung upon his answer.
But he shook his head and looked at me in sadness:
"Alas!" said he, "there is a jewel broken,
A jewel that none can mend except the Maker."
Now I knew well who had made my Idol,

And that I could never hope to find Him;
Wherefore in a little while I took my Idol,
And laid it away where I could see it no more.

And now I walk all alone within the garden,
And watch the shadows creep from flower to flower;
And I know that very soon it will be night-time.
And I weep no more, for something whispers
Through the hush of evening from the cool vastness
That when the glory of the sunset ripens
The great God will draw once more the curtain,
The great God, the Maker—and lo, my Idol!
Renewed, her arms the portals of heaven,
Her lips the chalice of eternal life!

Lake Cecebe, 1914.

MY INN

When your feet are burning,
Soiled with the highway's dust;
When your soul is yearning
For the rest which it knows is just;
When the sweat-drops blear your eyesight, and night rolls up the linn—
Beyond the road's last turning
You'll find my Inn.

Like a bower in Maytime
All year the flowers blow,
And there is no haytime,
For green the grasses grow.
And the sunshine is your brother, and the birds are all your kin,
And all the work is playtime
At my Inn.

When the tempest lowers
O'er the world, and thunders crash,
Then friendly showers
Tap merrily on the sash;
For there's never a storm comes blowing to trouble you with its din
In the fair vale of flowers
Where hides my Inn.

Would you enter lightly?
Step quickly to the door,
Howe'er unsightly,
Travel-stained and sore.
For the door is always open, has neither bolt nor pin:
You are ever welcomed rightly
At my Inn.

Be it late or early,
You will not lack for cheer:
From the well-spring, pearly,
They'll bring you vintage clear:
For there's never an empty barrel, nor ever an empty bin—
And the lettuces grow curly
At my Inn.

If you'd rest or slumber,
The beds are clean and soft;
Cast off your cumber,
Mount you up aloft.
And there you may sleep till doomsday with the clothes tucked round your chin:
For the hours have no number
At my Inn.

Oh! a place of pleasure
Is this sweet Inn of mine,
Where you get full measure
For all that toil of thine.
And they never ask a penny—to pay twice were a sin!—
Bring only your heart's treasure
To my Inn.

Be you faint or weary?
On ever to the end!
Tho' the way be dreary,
Somewhere you'll reach that bend;
And beyond the road's last turning, where the flowered paths begin,
You'll see lights twinkling cheery
From my Inn.

Toronto, 1911.

SMOKE

All the windy ways of man
Are a smoke that rises up.—Tennyson.

BREATH of the mine,
Wraith of the oak—
Who shall divine
The riddle of smoke?

I

Weave me a cloud,
Cover the sky;
Weave me a shroud:
Life is a lie!

Weave it not thin,
Weave it not fine;
Vivid as sin,
This, the design:

Beings of might
Toiling with death;
Frail things, affright,
Gasping for breath;

Cities of doom,
  Blackened and grim;
Battle-cloud's gloom;
  Charred forests dim;

Crater and pit,
  Furnace and pyre;—
Boldly in-knit
  With garlands of fire.

Weave it! The dust
  Lies in the urn:
So at last must
  All the world burn.

Take then your toll,
  Weaver of cloud.
Follows the whole:
  Weave me a shroud.

Weave me it true,
  Weave me it well—
Weave me it, weave me it,
  Vapor of Hell!

II

I built for myself a lodge in a fringe of the forest.
With joy I labored—the joy of the builder, the home-maker,—
Building a dream with the sills and the joists and the rafters:
Oh, the smell of the sweet wood, and the triumph-song of the hammer!
And last of all I gathered flat stones from the lakeside,
And split them, and fitted them, filling the spaces with mortar,
And fashioned a goodly hearth for the friendly fire.
Now for the crowning moment!—the fire is kindled,
The light smoke rises, and eddies, and sucks up the chimney.
Out of doors!—quick!—or lost the supreme satisfaction.
There it comes!—puff—puff. . . . The birds in the branches were singing,
The sun shone, the breeze fanned the perfume of hay from the meadows,
The lake laughed: all Nature insistent was wooing;
Yet I stood, heeding not, while wonder and joy filled my spirit
As I watched the sweet smoke from my hearth curling upward to Heaven.

III

Beyond a sky-swept crest of hills
  I see a smoke-plume rise;
And who shall tell me if a god
  Or devil in it flies?

Does it write black the Curse of Cain,
  Portend a bitter wrong?
Or does it from the feet of Love
  Float upward like a song?

Of shame, of ruin, and of death
  Behold the baleful sign!
Of friendship, faith, and goodly cheer—
  Who shall the truth divine?

Is there no good without the ill?
  No shadow without sun?
What know we yet of false and true,
  When all is said and done?

1914.

THE VICTOR

THE laurel falls upon my brow,
The plaudits thunder round the throne!
Lord God, support me even now,
Lest my true feebleness be shown.

The laurel falls like crown of lead
Upon a brow that reeks with sweat.
Oh, might its leaves hang withered, dead,
Could I this weariness forget!

This weariness of eye and brain,
This heaviness of heart and limb,
That tell of struggle all but vain,
Triumphal torches all but dim.

How slight a thing had turned the scale,
The victor and the vanquished changed;
And I had couched with those who fail,
And he had with the heroes ranged.

The flutter of a kerchief there,
A pebble kicked along the course,
A baffling lock of wind-blown hair
Across one's eyes—so small a source

Sometimes has victory or defeat.
  The Gods decide, the Fates decree,
They dice with Chance, and haply cheat:
  The sport of circumstance are we.

He sits in silence in his place,
  With steadfast eye and tranquil brow.
Lest I should wear a poorer grace,
  Lord God, be with me even now.

1914.

THE PASSING

He was instantly killed.—Newspaper.

Had I my way not that way would I die.
How the poor soul must shrink, snatched suddenly
From out its common pathway, sun and shade,
Into His presence, blinded by the glare
Of so great glory!
Rather would I know
And see the end far off, as one who stands
Upon a high ship's prow sees from afar
The lights of home, and lets his errant thoughts
Go wandering on adown the sinuous path,
The ever-shortening, sinuous path of light,
That streams from them to him along the waves.
He thinks no more of tempests that are past,
Forgets the raging bar he yet must cross,
Sees only the bright welcome waiting him:
The smiles, the festive joy, the happy tears.
Thus, drawing near to my eternal home,
I would compose my mind, and send it forth
Along the shortening pathway of my days,
Till all my doubts, my fears, were merged, were lost
In the fair vision of the welcoming Christ;
And I should wait Death's kiss with joy and peace.

Then, at the last—be it my lot to lie,
Not girded by four walls, or hemmed about
By beauty-blotting handiwork of man;
But in some forest shade beside the sea,
Or where the mellow wind among the pines
Sings the wild sweetness of our northern lakes
To souls that listen on their magic isles.
Here the bright day glides tranquil to its close.
I hear the kindly voices that I love,
The water washing on the lonely crags,
The evening call of loon and whip-poor-will.
I feel the cool breath of God's holy night
Breathed round me, on my hand the hand of one
Best loved of all I leave behind. I see—
O Heaven, pity those who cannot see!—
Glory on glory—glory on that face
So near, so dear; gold glory on the wave,
Purple, and gold, and darting tongues of flame;
Calm glory on the cloud-piled dome of heaven;
Glory of fire on the great sun's face.
So slips my soul, scarce heeding of the change,
From glory unto glory: Heaven breaks—
Eternal glory on the face of God!

Lake Joseph, 1911.

MARGARET

Sick in bed lies Margaret,
(Would that it were I),
All her castled world o'erset:
Does she weep and sigh?

She is brave as she is fair,
Fought has she and won:
All her soul is driven bare
For the lovely sun.

Here she lies, and with her smile
Teaches, rules, us all;
Thin white hands with gentle guile
Hold our love in thrall.

I should love her were she dead,
Dead to eye and ear:
When she lies upon the bed,
Talking, smiling, here

In her little boudoir cap
With its bow of blue,
Where's the undiscerning chap
Wouldn't love her too?

Christmas!—o'er the sleeping mart
Answers bell to bell:
How they'll clamor in the heart
When our Love is well!

Toronto, *December* 1914.

A CHRISTMAS FANTASY

A STAR came out of the East,
  And a Dream came out of the West.
They thought that the Star would set,
  They dreamed that the Dream was best.

The Dream of an Empire Vast
  As the world's night-bordered hem,
The Star of Eternal Love—
  They met at Bethlehem.

And the Dream became a star,
  That fell through the night, and died;
But the Star became a dream,
  Fulfilled through aeons wide.

Toronto, *December* 1911.

MORNING PRAYER

THE old bell calls to morning prayers
From his bower of ivy-vine:
The old bell-ringer kneels on the stairs
To mumble o'er his line:
The little birds have all sung theirs:
Lo! I will sing me mine.

Pater Noster—Lord of Heaven,
Holy, Holy is Thy name!
Strike the chords of Lyra, seven,
Till each string sounds forth Thy fame.
Let the sun fulfil his motion
Day by day at Thy sure word,
Let the wind o'er land and ocean
Sing the greatness of the Lord,
Let the rain in gentle showers
Patter patter praise to Thee,
Let the thunder's mighty powers
Rend the sky and shake the sea,
Till all nations shall enthrone Thee
King of Kings eternally.

Pater Noster—The Creator
Of the earth and all therein,
From the poles to the equator
Cleanse it, cleanse it, Lord, from sin!
Thou, who mak'st the flowers fragrant,
Send'st the seasons ever sure,
Take Thy children, erring, vagrant,
Make their lives so true, so pure.
Grant them harvests free, abundant;
After labor give them rest;
Let not sorrow be redundant—
Lord, Thou knowest what is best.
Those who fall beneath life's burden,
Take, O take them to Thy breast.

Pater Meus—O my Father,
Hear the cry of this poor soul!
Punish not my sins, but rather
In Thy mercy make me whole.
Doubt and Fear pursue, o'ertake me;
Faith and I—oh! weak are we.
I am lost if Thou forsake me:
Pity my humility!
Give me strength to fight and vanquish
The grim foes who bar my way,
Heal my wounds, and calm my anguish—
Hear, O hear these prayers I say!
Lead me through the world's long night-time
To the pure and perfect day.

Pater Omnis—Shall I ask it?—
Yea: for Thou hast lovèd me.
Let me bear one fragment-basket,
Filled with love by Galilee:
Let me, for my soul's salvation,
Love on all men here bestow,
Not for mine own exaltation,
But for His, whose love I show.
Save me from the name of scorner,
Teach me how to help the weak,
Lift the fallen, soothe the mourner,
Comfort those who comfort seek—
Make me like, and ever liker,
Holy Jesus kind and meek.

The prayer is sung, the bell is still,
The ivy flashes in the sun.
The old bell-ringer hath a chill:
His course is nearly run.
I'll forth and aid him up the hill:
The new day is begun.

SELECTIONS FROM JUVENILE VERSES

(Written before the age of 17)

AUTUMN LEAVES

Golden and red,—golden and red,—
Beautiful dying,—beautiful dead,—
Autumn leaves.

In the winds of winter, bitter,
Sparkling with the snowflakes' glitter,
Sway the buds.
In the spring awake from slumber,
Tiny leaves, in countless number—
Myriads.

Through the summer, hot and dreary,
Hang they, parched with waiting, weary
For the Fall.
'Twould be scarce worth while their growing,
'Mid the breezes, idly blowing,
Were this all.

This is but the preparation
For the glorious consummation
Of their day;
'Tis when they at last are dying,
And when some in death are lying,
That we say:

Golden and red,—golden and red,—
Beautiful dying,—beautiful dead,—
Autumn leaves.

Wolfville, *October* 1905.

THE FLAMES

THE weird fantastic motion of the flames
Upon the soul exerts a mystic power:
We watch them paint, with wonder, hour by hour,
Strange objects having neither forms nor names;
And now each picture as it fades away,
Starts in the mind some train of hidden thought—
A dream of what shall be, perhaps, is wrought,
Or yet again, fond mem'ry holds its sway;
But oftenest on fancy's wings we're borne
To the dim precincts of the spirit-world,
And Ghosts and Goblins seem more real when furled
In fiery garments ever gashed and torn.
Oh! better far is it than songs or games,
To read sweet myst'ries in the dancing flames.

Wolfville, Nova Scotia, 1906.

THE WOOD-LAND SPIRIT

HIGHER and higher,
Flamed our camp-fire,
Casting a glow
Over the snow,
A circle of light
Surrounded by night.

Sudden each heart stood still:
Over the vale and the hill,
Sounding from regions remote,
A long-drawn mystical note
Swelled on the air and dropped—
Softly it sank and stopped.

Then, through the branches,
Swift avalanches
Of music and song
Hurried along
From this side and that
All round where we sat.

While yet the forest rang
Into our midst there sprang
Ghost-like, a figure bright,
Robed like the winter night;
Backward her tresses flung,
Softly this song she sung:

Queen of the wood-land,
Angel of wild things,
Spirit of Freedom, I am.
Come to my good land,
Drink of its mild springs,
Rest in its quiet and calm.

Rich your reward is,
Ye who obey me,
Ye who answer my call.
What your reward is,
No need to say ye:
Ye yourselves know of it all.

Ceasing, she whirled around,
Rose from the snowy ground
Leaving no foot-print or mark—
Vanishing into the dark;
While the last long mystical note
Was echoed in regions remote.

Wolfville, 1906.

(*Prize poem in Acadia Athenæum when the author was fifteen years old.*)

THE GOBLIN OF ELFINDALE

THE Goblin of Elfindale ages long
Had sung in the woodland his merry song.

He had lived in the far-off, golden day
When the Druids under their oaks held sway.

He had crouched with fear in his snug abode
When the Romans were making the woodland road.

He had heard the ring of the clanging blades
As the knights rode by to the far Crusades.

And now, each day, when the sun was high,
He sang as the stage-coach rattled by.

But at last he grew weary, and went to bed
On a bank of mosses; "I'm sleepy," he said.

And no wonder he was, the poor little thing:
For a thousand years he'd done nothing but sing.

So he rested, and knew not what passed on the way.
The leaves fell around him, and rotted away,

And the wild rose silently over him crept,
But still the Goblin of Elfindale slept.

But ah! he jumps! he's awake at last!—
With a snort and a roar a great car flies past.

And the Goblin stared at the dust that rose,
And with elfin fingers he held his nose.

The Goblin of Elfindale scratched his head,
"My whiskers! I must have slept!" he said.

Toledo, Ohio, 1906.

(*Gold Badge in St. Nicholas League when the author was sixteen years old.*)

A LAD AND A LASS

A WILD-ROSE twined o'er the old oak-tree:
  Sweet Lucy sat by me upon the grass:
She plucked a flower, and gave it me—
  I was a lad, and she was a lass.

A thorn on the flower pricked her hand:
  I bowed my head like a priest at mass,
And healed the hurt with a potion bland—
  I was a lad, and she was a lass.

I feared her frown, but she smiled instead,
  And the light, like the sparkle of wine and glass,
Which shone in her eyes, quite turned my head—
  I was a lad, and she was a lass.

I kissed the rose, and I kissed her lips.
  The crickets were chirping among the grass.
We were happy through to our finger-tips—
  I was a lad, and she was a lass.

The rose is faded—I keep it yet—
  The gray years come, and the gay years pass,
With joy, with sorrow, but no regret,
  For those who once were a lad and a lass.

And the rose still twines o'er the old oak-tree,
And often we sit there upon the grass;
And the past is lost in to-day for me,
And I am a lad, and she is a lass.

1907.

THE QUEEN OF MY HEART

With mother-love I am wrapped about!
And I'll hold it fast in my heart's redoubt,
For mother's love is worth more to me
Than all the gems in the depths of the sea.
  I have uncles and aunts and relations galore;
  My affections are scattered on these and some more;
Yet mother has always had her part,
And she has been ever the queen of my heart.

'T is said that, when I am older grown,
And have a family of my own,
The love that now is so deep and strong,
Will shrink to make room for the new love-throng.
  I may have babes, and nephews, and nieces galore,
  I may scatter affection to every shore!
But mother will never lose her part,
And she shall be ever the queen of my heart.

June 7, 1905.

MY DAD AN' I

My dad an' I we're splendid chums,
We'll stick thro' every ill that comes
Together like two sugar-plums,
My dad an' I.

We go afishin' in the spring,
An' tho' we oft get nary thing,
We're each as happy as a king,
My dad an' I.

We go agunnin', too, for game,
An' tho' we don't attain to fame,
We like it first rate just the same,
My dad an' I.

I find, when I the past review,
He's given me lickin's very few:
We know each other through an' through,
My dad an' I.

Besides the cane he's given me pills
An' other things to cure my ills,
An' all along he's paid the bills;
I thank him for 't.

Thus through the past, until this time,
When I do pen this little rhyme,
We have worked out a fair regime,
My dad an' I.

Into the future none may look,
Fast is it shut, like a brass-bound book;
But we'll pull through by hook or crook,
My dad an' I.

Wolfville, 1905.

BLOMIDON

DARKNESS, and smoke, and a distant rumble,
A sulphurous smell and a grinding grumble,
And the earth began to heave and tumble.

It heaved and tumbled, till, at the close,
When after the tumult came repose,
A mighty pile majestic rose.

Then through the ages nature wrought
With cunning skill, and ever sought
To shape the mountain to her thought.

The rain and frost both lent their aid;
A dress of pine and fir she made,
With grassy slopes and rocks inlaid.

O Blomidon! when wreathed in mist,
Or by Acadian sunsets kissed,
Or when the Storm-king's mighty fist

Descends with thunder on thy crest,
And seas are dashed upon thy breast,
Or when all round is perfect rest—

A waveless sea, an azure sky,
With dainty cloudlets floating by,
Or snowy banks of cumuli—

Of far-famed scenes the central part,
Thou stand'st, a masterpiece of art,
Belov'd of nature's artist heart.

Wolfville, 1905.

FRIENDS IN THE FOREST

Give me no crowded city,
When my heart is lone and sad,
With its countless thronging thousands.—
The tumult would drive me mad.

In the throbbing life of the city,
Who cares for another's moan?—
Tho' around me the crowd were surging,
I should stand by myself, alone.

Give me no heaving ocean,
Give me no wind-swept plain;
For there—is but time for brooding,
Nothing to heal the pain.

But give me the wide-spread forest,
With its hemlock, and beech, and pine,
With its ash, and its oak, and its maple,
And its ferns, and its mosses fine,

With its rocky glens and streamlets,
And the music of water-falls,
With its birds, and beasts, and flowers,
And its dreamy wild-wood calls.

Tho' I wander, alone, through the forest,
There are friends upon every hand:
Tried friends, who comfort and soothe me,
As they whisper "We understand."

Wolfville, 1906.

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